Judaisms: cultural repertoires and historical contingencies in the making of collective identities

JUDAISMS : CULTURAL REPERTOIRES AND HISTORICAL CONTIGENCIES IN THE MAKING OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES[1]

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The aim of this essay is to outline and explain the transformations and multiple expressions of 'Judaism' in time and space. I shall try to do this, first, from a general sociological point of view; and, second, from the point of view of theories of the nation and nationalism. I shall thus try to answer the question which is central to this book: How can the study of human societies (sociology and anthropology), and its subfield, the study of nations and nationalism, help us to understand the diversity of Jewish religious, ethno-national and political life in its long history?

The essay is divided into three parts: Part one considers briefly the origins of the term 'Judaism'. Part two attempts to apply some sociological and anthropological concepts to the phenomenon of the diversity of Judaism: of the different forms that Jewish spiritual and social life has taken over time and in the various Jewish communities across the world, and in their core areas of concentration in Europe, the Americas and the Middle East. This part relies on the ideas of the late Shmuel Eisenstadt and Alan Mittleman. Part three considers 'Judaism' outside the various Jewish communities. It does not consider anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism. But rather it considers 'Gentile', and particularly Christian (European and North American) 'Judaisms': the adoption and adaptation of Jewish

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concepts and forms of life by Christian and especially Protestant societies. As I myself specialise in the study of nations and nationalism, this part naturally relies on concepts taken from nationalism studies, and especially from the analyses of Anthony D. Smith and Steven Grosby.

The paper offers a broad Weberian analytical framework and *problematique* for the consideration of Judaism's multiple manifestations (Weber 1952; 1957; 1977; 1978; Whimster 2004). This means that the present paper is an essay in historical sociology, and thus, methodologically, a combination of historical particularism and typological generalisation.

PART 1: DEFINING 'JUDAISM'

I define 'Judaism' following Alan Mittleman, as a term that describes and distinguishes the 'comprehensive way of life of the Jews'. According to Mittleman, the term 'Judaism' is a 'foreign term', i.e. a term imported into the vocabulary of Jewish communities from the Greek *'ioudaismos'*. The Jews used to refer to their distinctive ways in terms of 'torah' or 'the custom of Moses and Israel' (Mittleman 2010: 342).

The Greek term 'Judaism' was coined or first used by a Greek speaking Jew, the unknown author of one of the books of the Bible, known as II Maccabees. The term was used in a context of Jewish confrontation with Hellenism, the surrounding dominant civilisation. The confrontation took place in Jerusalem during the second century BC, in the reign of the Hellenistic king Antiochus the Epiphanes, one of the successors to Alexander the Great's Empire (Smith 1983: 155).

Thus, the term Judaism emerges as a relational term – a term that requires an 'Other'. Furthermore, 'Judaism' emerges as a confrontational, polemical term, against Hellenism and forced Hellenisation, and as a defence of Jewish identity. *Theoretically*, and according to the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth, contact with an 'Other' is a classic social condition in the process of identity, and thus boundary formation and reformation (Barth 1969). Indeed, the 're-' is operative in Barth's view, as it signals change – constant change as a group comes into contact with new groups over time. These conditions of emergence of the term 'Judaism' also embody more generally one of the three main factors (see below) that have changed the ways of the Jews – historical contingency.

Mittleman usefully identifies the problems that the term 'Judaism' has raised in the modern era (Mittleman 2010: 341). If the modern era that began with Enlightenment rationalism is responsible for re-defining 'reli-

gion' in narrower and secular terms, it is also responsible for the ambiguities and inadequacies of the modern European use of the term 'Judaism'. Modern Europeans have used the term 'Judaism' like 'Hinduism', and 'Christianity', to refer to the religious traditions of the Jews. This is a reductive usage. For it leaves out, and thus unaccounted, the other characteristics of 'Judaism', or of the totality of Jewish life that Shmuel Eisenstadt has described as 'Jewish civilisation':

- its primordiality, i.e. its references to descent from common ancestors, symbolised in the persons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;
- its association with a particular community – a people or nation with a strong historical consciousness; and
- its political implications and institutions, that the state of Israel has come to embody, albeit in new or modern ways since 1948 (Eisenstadt 2004: 21-2).

Nevertheless, in modern times, the term 'Judaism' has come to be internalised, i.e., accepted by Jews as an adequate descriptor for and an expression of their distinctiveness. At the same time, the actual content of this designation has varied, challenging attempts to define the 'essence' of Judaism (Mittleman 2010: 343).

Although Judaism is as protean and multi-dimensional as most other civilizational complexes and ideological '– isms', it is possible to isolate three interrelated core principles that are a) constant and b) the pivots of change and variation:

- Monotheism and especially the worship of a universal (not tribal) God – 'YHWH' (Mittleman 2010: 345);
- The Covenant between God and His people embodied in the Torah – the Law that embodies God's Word – and thus expresses His will;
- A particularistic, primordial and sacred definition of a people, Israel. Israel is defined as a distinct, ethnic nation, i.e., a type of human association that is based on descent from common ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and also as a sacred nation. Israel is defined as a nation chosen by God to be a 'kingdom of priests and holy nation'. Its members were chosen and called by God to be the primary keepers and upholders of His Commandments – of the just and virtuous life (Exodus 19: 6; Mittleman 2010: 345; Grosby 2001).

Part 2: Explaining the mutations of 'Judaism'

According to Shmuel Eisenstadt, both continuity and heterogeneity are central characteristics of Jewish history: '…that special complex

characteristic of Jewish history… a strong and continuous collective identity combined with ongoing changes in the basic institutional molds and with many varieties of rationalization of religious orientations in general and of their institutional manifestation in particular… (Eisenstadt 2004: 19).

How do we explain such heterogeneity in both the content of Jewish life, i.e., its culture, and in Jewish social organisation and activity? I shall argue, following Eisenstadt, that the various species of the genus 'Judaism' are due to three main factors:

a) The nature of Judaism – its internal dynamics;
b) Rationalisation, a process first observed by Max Weber in all major world religions to which Judaism belongs; and
c) External events, or historical contingency: the variety of circumstances with which different Jewish communities have had to contend – to come to terms with, especially in conditions of exile and dispersal from their homeland, following the loss of their sovereignty.

A) FIRST, THE NATURE OF JUDAISM:

According to Mittleman and Eisenstadt, the very nature of the core of Judaism propels it to diversity. It must be remembered that unlike Christianity and Islam, Judaism is not a creedal religion, that is, there is no, for example, Nicene Creed that a Jew confesses. At most, perhaps Deuteronomy 6: 4 approximates a creedal confession. What this means is that there is an exploratory openness, a necessary continual re-examination of the contours of Jewish belief and existence, that invites a significant degree of diversity, as can be clearly seen, for example, in the Talmudic disputes. Thus, there has never been "Judaism", but always "Judaisms" (Grosby 1996). And what is this core principle that favours diversification and pluralism? This seems to be the idea of the Covenant. The idea of the Covenant implies the following:

1. A Covenant relates not only a people, Israel, with their God, but also the people of Israel, distinguished by their worship of this God and His Word turned into their Law, to one another, as a 'confederation' (Mittleman 2010: 346-7), or an *Eidgenossenschaft* (Eisenstadt 2004: 11).
2. The idea of the Covenant implies the free and conscious decision to bind one's life with others and with the one God – no fate or determinism is involved, but agency is strongly implied. Covenant making

requires consent: the free moral choice, the assent of free agents. Its significance can be related to modern social contract theory.
3. Covenant preserves the unique distinctiveness of the covenanting parties – it resists mystical absorption in the 'Godhead'.
4. Covenant relates disparate beings or groups through subscription to a common moral framework – the Law of the Torah; but, crucially, a subscription to re-interpretation (for example, Midrash).
5. Judaism, and especially Talmudic Judaism, is a culture of criticism. Disputes regarding competing claims as to how best to represent God's covenant partner, Israel, have been a central source of division and thus heterogeneity. The disputes are legitimate given the crucially democratic nature of Judaism that renders holy all the people of Israel. Such disputes have produced a wide range of interpretations of 'Judaism'. These have included, not only the Zealots, whose revolt brought about the Roman Destruction of the Temple and the end of Jewish Jerusalem in 70 CE, but also Christianity (Mittleman 2010: 349). Such diverse interpretations of the proper way of being a Jew, or the proper way of being a member of God's chosen people, 'Israel', have created a complex matrix of co-existing Judaisms. However, Christianity was eventually to grow independently and indeed in hostility to all other forms of Judaism. In this way, it showed the limits of the matrix and became itself an 'Other' – a boundary between Jews and non-Jews (Mittleman 2010: 349).

b) Second, rationalisation:

According to Eisenstadt, it was in Judaism that the rationalisation of religious orientations was first developed. The transformation of Judaism towards greater intellectual and moral coherence and universality is already evident in the period of the First Temple (c.1000-586 B.C.E.). Its constitutive elements are: a focus on ethics and the universalism of its basic religious concepts, especially its notion of the one and universal God (monotheism) and His Laws that are of universal significance (Eisenstadt 2004: 23; see also Weber 1952). It is this universalism that has made Judaism one of the major world religions.

Like other major world religions, i.e. religions with universalist implications, ancient Judaism, 'came to negate or overcome *simple* magic and ritual forms as the major modes by which man related to the "other" world' or the universe (Eisenstadt 2004: 4). Furthermore, Judaism was the seedbed of the great breakthrough towards ethical religiosity, and thus

to the partial demagicisation and deritualisation of the religious life (consider, for example, the implications of the metaphor of Deuteronomy 10:16, 'circumcision of the foreskin of your heart'). Another major implication of rationalisation was the universalisation of the religious world view which, in Judaism was expressed most centrally in the belief in the universal, transnational God – the God for all mankind (Eisenstadt 2004: 10, 13).

c) AND THIRD, HISTORICAL CONTINGENCY:

Like all human societies, Jewish societies have had to adapt as well as respond to external circumstances. I shall here consider briefly only some of them, in a broad chronological order, from the end of the kingdom of Judaea in 73 AD to the present day.

The dispersion of the Jewish people in 73 AD: The most crucial and most centrally defining of the Jewish historical experience for almost two millennia has been the condition of Diaspora (Mittleman 2010: 350). Jewish dispersion was the result of the unsuccessful (but later greatly idealised as heroic and exemplary) Jewish revolt against Rome, whose consequence was the persecution of the Jews from Judaea by their Roman overlords in 73 AD. Indeed, Masada became the very symbol of the Jewish Diaspora (UNESCO). As different fragments of the Jewish people found themselves in different social contexts, the history of the Jews would consist of the multiple histories of the Jewish communities spread over Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. Consequently, the condition of diaspora has been a crucial factor in producing Jewish diversity.

This exilic and diasporic condition forced Jews to develop a variety of new concepts and forms for expressing their Jewish identity in response to the relations that Jewish communities developed to the societies in which they lived (Eisenstadt 2004: 272). These relations have varied and have been conceptualised in the language of ethnic and national studies in the terms of integration, including assimilation, segregation (voluntary or forced), persecution, expulsion and attempted extermination.

Judaism in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: During this period, and under both Islam and Christianity, Jewish life in the lands of Islam, the Iberian Peninsula under both Muslim and Christian rule, and in the German and French speaking lands and eventually in Eastern Europe, is characterised by locally or community-centred efforts towards self-preservation – towards the maintenance of continuity. The main concern is to sustain the consciousness of nationhood and some of its political

institutions that would secure the status of Jewish communities as *un stato nell stato*. The *Kehillot*, with its independent tax collecting functions, embodied this status and became the dominant model of localised Jewish self-government (Mittleman 2010: 351). However, also during this period, re-interpretation of the Jewish tradition continued, for example, and famously, the rabbinic understanding of the "Noahide laws", subsequently understood by individuals like Grotius and Selden as universal "natural laws", that provided a basis for Jewish understanding for their co-existence with Gentile monotheists (Grosby 2011: 73-96).

Modern times, XVIIIth century – onwards: The introversion, isolation (that was often also forced) and corporatism that had characterised 'pre-modern' Jewish diasporic communities came to an end with the advent of 'modernity'. Modern Jewish life is characterised by 'the re-entry into history' (Eisenstadt 2004: 84-101), and especially into West European history, of West European (and, later, in the XXth century, US-American) Jews. Two questions are immediately raised, here, in the context of this paper: first, how was this re-entry effected? And, second, how is this re-entry to be conceptualised?

First, through the concept of emancipation. The European Enlightenment, with its ideas of universal humanity and equality through citizenship, brought the emancipation of the Jews in many European states: in France, Jewish emancipation was definitive under Napoleon, at least in law, despite its ambiguities and conditions (Schnapper, Bordes-Benayoun and Raphael 2010: 1-24). However, in Germany, where the majority of the Jews of Western Europe lived, emancipation was episodic and subject to reversal.

The second way in which we can understand Jewish life in modern times (from the Enlightenment and French Revolution up to World War I and maybe II) is, according to Eisenstadt, through two core concepts that have produced new forms of Judaism, and new divisions among Jews: assimilation and nationalism (Eisenstadt 2004: 85-101).

I shall first look at assimilation. Modernity divided the Jews of Western Europe first, between: assimilationists and traditionalists. The assimilationists were different from their pre-modern counter-parts. They also varied among themselves. Their aims could be classified as follows:

i. total adaptation to the ways of their host, *Gentile* societies of the West. Such adaptation, and, most crucially, religious conversion, was not, of course a new pattern of Jewish response to their host societies;
ii. acquisition of full citizenship status as a purely religious denomination. This involved abandoning the traditional primordial-national and

political implications and characteristics of 'Judaism'. Jews became French, German, British citizens, and thus German Jews, French Jews or British Jews, whose loyalty was expected to be primarily to the state in which they were citizens (Cabanel and Bordes-Benayoun [eds] 2004). Such forms of assimilation would enable Jews to participate in the wider, modern and modernising societies of the emerging national state;

iii. the transformation or reform of their religious ways in their desire to integrate into the wider society. This transformation of traditional Jewish religiosity was most radical in Germany than elsewhere (Mittleman 2010: 354). Uncertainty over their status as citizens, led German Jews to devise a new form of Judaism, Reform Judaism. Reform Judaism came close to the ways of German Protestantism. Its primarily political aim was to convince the Germans that they were sufficiently like them to merit equal status (Mosse 1993). Born in the 1820s, it was banned in Germany in the 1840s because German authorities wanted to prevent Jewish attempts at *partial* assimilation. However, Reform Judaism flourished in the US where it was imported by German-Jewish immigrants after 1848 (Mittleman 2010: 354).

iv. constant adaptation to and participation in the innovations of modernity: as the dynamism of modernity would fuel constant change in the host Western societies, the assimilationists themselves would keep changing in a way expressed satirically in Heine's observation: 'as Christians do, so do Jews' = 'wie es christelt sich, judelt sich' (Heine quoted in Mittleman 2010: 356).

Regarding the traditionalists, as is the fate with all traditional ways, modernity transformed unreflective tradition into self-reflective traditionalism. Different forms of traditionalism emerged mostly in reaction against the Reform Judaism of German Jews: these ranged from a mild form of Conservative Judaism that was to flourish in the mid-20th c. in the USA, to a more defiant form, known as 'Orthodox Judaism'. Orthodox Judaism includes Hasidism and the traditional forms of Judaism from Arab lands, untouched by the European Enlightenment (Mittleman 2010: 355).

The second division among Jews in the late XIXth century, and with the emergence of Zionism, has been between nationalists and non-nationalists. The turn to nationalism was a consequence of a) Jewish resistance to what Ernest Gellner has called 'entropy' (assimilation and with it loss of identity) (see Gellner 1983); and b) the age of nationalism:

the creation of the European nation-state which, in its formative years of nation-building, sought cultural homogeneity and total political loyalty of its citizens. In so doing, the nation-state of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became increasingly not only intolerant of cultural difference, especially of cultural difference that involved political autonomy (which the *Kehilla* involved) inside its borders, but also resistant to the assimilationist option. The Jewish experience is proof of both of these tendencies in the virulent Anti-Semitism of fin-de-siècle Europe that culminated in Nazism.

Since the 1960s, there has been a crystallization of new forms of 'Judaism' and Jewish consciousness as a result of the following experiences which I here only briefly summarise:

First, the tragedy of the Holocaust. The Holocaust dashed Jewish hopes of assimilation and Jewish desire to participate in general society as a religious denomination and under the auspices and promises of the European liberal state. The Holocaust was the tragic culmination of the components of hostility in the intercivilizational relations between the Jews and their host civilizations, especially the Christian one. It was also 'unique' in the annals of humanity as 'the conscious, planned attempt to exterminate a whole nation, an entire people on the basis of a fully articulated ideology that has put this collectivity beyond the boundaries of humanity' (Eisenstadt 2004: 282).

Second, the emergence of the USA as, first, a centre of Jewish life; second, the place where Jews can claim to have achieved equal citizenship and security in the diaspora; and, third, a place from where Israel receives substantial philanthropic and political support (Waxman 2010: 81-104).

Third, the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 as, first, a home for the Jews; second, a new society created by a new form of ideological Judaism, Zionism; and third, a component of Jewish identity. As Irving Louis Horowitz has remarked, 'By common consensus, the two most extraordinary events of twentieth-century Jewish history were the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust, and the construction of the modern State of Israel. They bracket the 1940s, and they define Jewish parameters in the new millennium' (Horowitz 2002: 274).

And fourth, processes of secularisation in Western societies (Martin 2005). These processes have been combined with increasingly 'civic' conceptions of nationality and citizenship as opposed to the more ethnocultural conceptions of the nineteenth century (Schnapper 1998; Schnapper, Bordes-Benayoun and Raphael 2010).

As a consequence of the above, contemporary Jewish experience has the following general features:

NON-ORTHODOX JEWS:

Contemporary Jewish experience, especially in the Western world, is different from its nineteenth-century counterpart. Most Jews in the Diaspora, and especially in the secularised and increasingly more genuinely 'civic' societies of the Western world, are free to choose, change and create their identities on both a collective and an individual basis. Most of them, like other ethnic minorities and majorities, do not lead primarily Jewish/ethnic lives but do not want to lose their Jewish identity, and have found social space for what seem to them distinctly Jewish activities. To this end, they are constantly reformulating and reconstructing the components and symbols of this identity (Mittleman 2010: 360; see also Gans 1979). These components and symbols of Jewish identity include, a) attachments to a religious tradition; b) primordial elements; and c) political activism especially in relation to the state of Israel). As Eisenstadt has remarked, these are the elements of 'Judaism' that in the XIXth century seemed antithetical to the incorporation of Jews in modern societies (Eisenstadt 2004: 282-3). Consequently, in the contemporary, more individualistic social context, Judaism emerges as a much looser repertoire of cultural motifs from which individual Jews choose their own badges, their personal symbols of Jewish identity.

ORTHODOX JEWS:

As far as Orthodox Jews are concerned, these, too, have combined Orthodoxy with increasing participation in the arenas of life of the general society, such as higher education and other occupational spheres which would have been anathema or at least alien to the older, Eastern European traditionalists (Eisenstadt 2004: 283-4).

PART 3: JUDAISM OUTSIDE THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Looking at the literature on nationalism in an effort to understand our central concept, 'Judaism', one is struck by one thing: that Jewish civilisation and experience have themselves furnished some of the core

analytical-historical concepts and types of this literature. I shall give here the more salient instances of this:

'Judaism' as 'Western nationalism'

Hans Kohn, himself a Jew from late Habsburg Prague (b.1891-d.1971), developed the now classic dichotomy of the varieties of European nationalism from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, on the basis of the Jewish experience.

In his now canonical book, *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944), Kohn contrasted a liberal and inclusive conception of nationalism, which he called 'Western' – west of the river Rhine – with another conception, which he termed 'Eastern nationalism' – east of the river Rhine. The former had France as its primary embodiment; the latter, Germany. We now refer to this distinction in terms of 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalisms. Kohn described his dichotomy with his typical eloquence in the following terms: 'Two main concepts of nation and fatherland emerged in the intertwining of influences and conditions; conflicting and fusing, they became embodied in currents of thought in all nations and, to a varying degree, in entire nations. The one was basically a rational and universal concept of political liberty and the rights of man, looking towards the city of the future… It found its chief support in the political and economic strength of the educated middle classes and, with a shift of emphasis, in the social-democratically organized labor movements. The other was basically founded on history, on monuments and graveyards, even harking back to the mysteries of ancient times and of tribal solidarity. It stressed the past, the diversity and self-sufficiency of nations. It found its support, above all, among the aristocracy and the masses. These two concepts of nationalism are the poles which the new age with its innumerable shadings and transitions will revolve…' (Kohn 2005: 574).

Kohn emphasised that the ideal-typical cases and cultural roots of what he termed 'Western' nationalism were 'Israel and Hellas'. Kohn understood that the Jews, like the Greeks, 'shared two basic traits that set them apart in the ancient world: individuals mattered, and they achieved national self-consciousness' (Calhoun in Kohn 2005: xvii). Both these traits 'prepared the spiritual foundations of democracy' (Kohn 2005: 27). Thus, through their cultural choices, the two societies, Israel and Hellas, and those later ones that looked up to them, transformed the 'natural group-sentiment of tribalism' which is common to all ethnic groups, into a consciousness – an ideology.

'JUDAISM' AS A EUROPEAN CONCEPTION OF 'NATIONALISM'

Reflecting on the emotional intensity of modern nationalist movements, Anthony D. Smith has considered the religious origins of the doctrine of nationalism. For Smith, nationalism is a doctrine that emerged in early modern Europe gathering momentum from the seventeenth century onwards. This ideology sacralised the people as a 'nation'. According to Smith, '…the passion evoked by nationalism, the powerful commitments felt by so many people to their own national identities, could not be explained in conventional economic or political terms… Whence did [nationalism] draw its sustenance and its wide appeal? Surely, only from deep-rooted, enduring religious beliefs and sentiments' (Smith 2003: vii).

Building on and combining with the work of Carlton Hayes (1960), Elie Kedourie (1960), Conor Cruise O'Brien (1988), Steven Grosby (1993), and Adrian Hastings (1997), among others, Anthony D. Smith has recognised and emphasised the crucial significance of Judaeo-Christian and, most crucially for the purposes of this paper, of Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) concepts, in the formation of modern European nations as well as of the USA. In particular, Anthony D. Smith has stressed the central and formative role in nationalist ideology of two biblical concepts:

- The idea of the chosen nation, and
- The idea of the Covenant between God and his chosen people.

Anthony D. Smith has also used these ideas to explain the persistence in the XXIst century, not only of 'Judaism' among Jews, but also of nationalism among non-Jews, and especially those societies with a Christian tradition.

Now, how did Judaism mutate into European nationalism? This was the result of the mutation of Judaism into Christianity. As Christianity encompassed both Moses' Old Testament and Jesus' New, it transferred the core concepts of 'election' and 'covenant' to all Christian nations. These concepts produced a) religious competition among Christian nations and regions for the title of true 'Israel'; and b) planted the seed of liberty and equality that was to flourish in the fertile ground of the Protestant Reformations. Indeed, Anthony D. Smith has stressed the particular salience of the ideas of the 'chosen nation' and of 'the Covenant' between God and His chosen nation, in the national consciousness of Protestant nations. This is because the Reformation drew its adherents even closer to the biblical ideas of the Hebrew

Bible[2]. Typical cases of European nations that manifested the ideas of election and covenant most explicitly are England from the XVIth century onwards, and Holland from the XVIIth century onwards. In the words of the great Elizabethan poet and champion of the English Reformation, John Milton, England was 'this Nation chos'n before any other' (cited in Smith 2003: 47). The other well-known case with claims to be the new Israel, has, of course, been the USA. As Grosby has shown, the USA's foundational concepts have been its covenantal Constitution and its sense of providential destiny to create an 'American Israel' (see Grosby 1993: 49-80; and Grosby forthcoming; Smith 2003: 138; Roshwald 2006).

A note of caution, here. As Conor Cruise O'Brien has noted, as long as the sacralisation of the nation was tied to Judaeo-Christian religious concepts, the status of 'the nation of God' was conditional and required humility and obedience. But when, as in Nazi Germany, the idealisation of the nation became detached from its religious constrictions, 'the nation of God' became destructive in the hubris of *the nation as God* (O'Brien 1988).

I would like to end with a brief mention of one type of Judaism that I have personally researched: this is the Christian Judaism that sought explicitly to be combined with that other civilisation that lies at the centre of the culture not only of Europe, but of the Western world, namely, Hellenism. As two distinct cultural and civilizational complexes, Judaism and Hellenism were gradually appropriated by the Western world. Being infinitely and variously combined over the Christian millennia, although not without tension, they became, and remain, still, vital sources of cohesion, meaning and renewal for Western societies. Indeed, in their various avatars, they have been made the cornerstones of modern Western civilisation, and constitute the two impulses of its dual nature.

The mid-Victorian movement that was led by Matthew Arnold and became known as 'Hebraism and Hellenism' exemplifies, in modern times, and before the disasters of the Two World Wars, one of the combinations and re-combinations of Judaism with Greek classical civilisation (Arnold 1990 [1869]; see also Arnold 1864). It shows the hopes for a new, reconciled world, a world that would fuse Jews and Greeks/Gentiles – a

[2] Key here is the turn to the Old Testament which is now no longer viewed as merely 'superceded' by the 'New'. In other words, what we have here, however paradoxical, is an 'Old Testament Christianity'.

world that would combine the 'moral fibre' of the Hebrew people with Greek reason and the Greek love for physical strength and beauty ('sweetness and light'). Inspired by Heinrich Heine's vision of what we might call a Judaeo-Grecian synthesis that sought to encompass humanity and capture the fullness of human life, the movement produced Muscular Christianity in Christian societies and Muscular Judaism in the Jewish communities of Western Europe and especially Germany (Leoussi and Aberbach 2002; Leoussi 1998). The term 'Muscular Judaism' (*muskel-Judenthum*) was coined by Max Nordau at the 1898 Zionist Congress. *Muskel-Judenthum* prepared Jews for the physical struggles that Zionism was to demand of them – the achievement of 'the Jewish National Idea' (Maccabi World Union).

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